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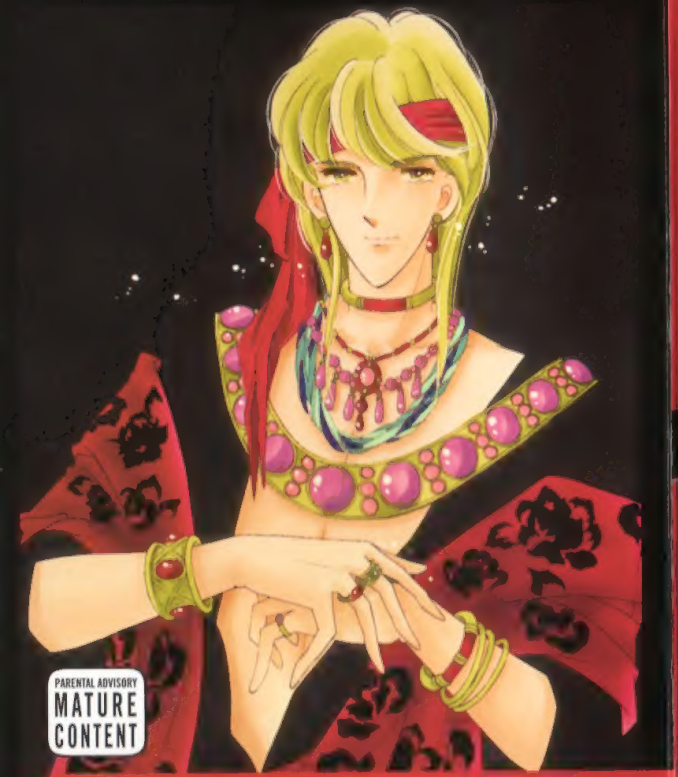
RED RIVER™



PARENTAL ADVISORY
MATURE CONTENT

17 story and art by Chie Shinohara

shōjo

RED RIVER 17

Chie Shinohara

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RED RIVER™

Yuri, a teen of the 21st century, has been transported to ancient Anatolia as part of a scheme by the evil Nakia, Queen of the Hittites. Only the intervention of Nakia's stepson, Prince Kail, saved Yuri from the Queen's bloodthirsty intentions. As an unintended consequence, the people of Anatolia are now convinced that Yuri is the incarnation of the great war-goddess Ishtar.

While Kail is away from Hattusa, his commander Rusafa is accused of attacking a noblewoman, and, on Nakia's suggestion, is subjected to a brutal test of innocence. News then comes from Ugarit, a nation allied to the Hittites, that Kail's brother is missing. Yuri goes to investigate and finds that the king of Ugarit has received a letter from Nakia that's turned him against Kail. As for the people of Ugarit, they're convinced they're about to be slaughtered—not by their conquest-hungry neighbors the Egyptians, but by the Hittites!

Over 15 million copies sold in Japan!

$9.99 USA/$11.99 CAN

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This book reads from right to left.

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RATED T FOR OLDER TEEN

RED RIVER™

vol.17

Yuri, a typical junior high student, is sucked into a puddle and emerges in the ancient Hittite Empire! Evil Queen Nakia has drawn Yuri across time and space to be a sacrifice to her god, Teshub. Rescued by the handsome but arrogant Prince Kail, Yuri falls in love with him and willingly gives up all chance to return home. Acclaimed as the incarnation of the war goddess Ishtar by the Hittite people, Yuri strives to live up to their hopes and her own dreams by supporting Kail, who has now assumed the Hittite throne.

Controlled by Nakia's black water, Rusafa has kidnapped Yuri and brought her to Urhi, Nakia's chief henchman. Suspecting Nakia's hand in this, Kail announces that he will offer a public prayer requesting Yuri's safe return. If this doesn't happen, Nakia will be sacrificed to appease the gods. In order to save Nakia, Urhi leaves a clue to Yuri's whereabouts that her aides quickly act on. Urhi then leaves Yuri with the befuddled and besotted Rusafa, telling him that he now has the opportunity to do as he wishes with his beloved Ishtar. But Urhi's expectations are thwarted by Rusafa's sense of honor and reverence, for he is found only kissing Yuri's feet. While Rusafa is brought to his senses Yuri rushes back to the palace to a surprised but pleased Ilbani. Curiously, he asks her if she can swim.

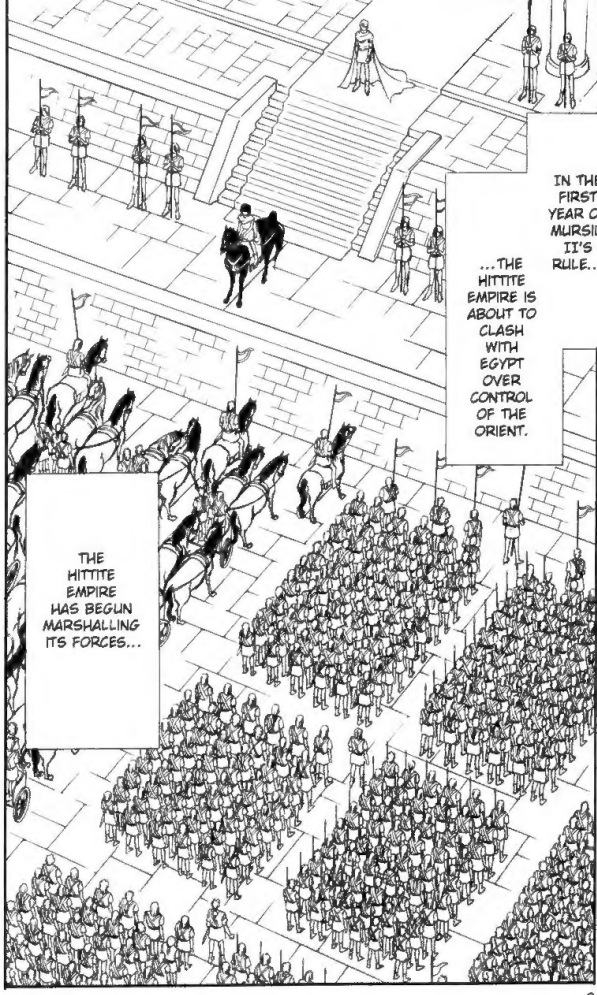
As Kail offers his prayer at the temple, Yuri emerges from the temple's spring. The citizens witness this seeming miracle and, to Nakia's outrage, begin cheering Yuri as Tawannana. Later, Kail tells the senate he wishes to marry Yuri. While many senators object, Nakia unexpectedly says she will support the union – if Yuri leads the Hittite armies to victory over Egypt. Yuri accepts the commission, even though she's certain it's a pretext for another of Nakia's schemes.

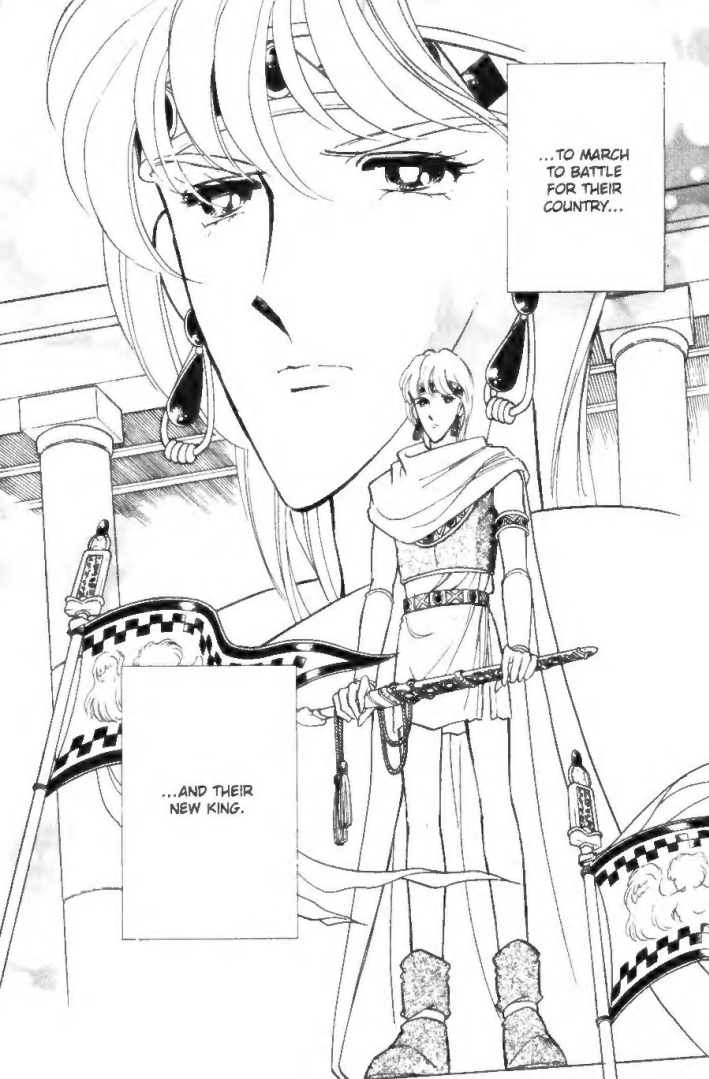
Story Thus Far:

Mursili II
The former Crown Prince Kail, now king of the Hittite Empire.

Yuri
A Japanese schoolgirl magically transported to the ancient Hittite Empire.

Queen Nakia
Kail's stepmother, an evil sorceress determined to see her own son on the Hittite throne.


IN THE FIRST YEAR OF MURSILI II'S RULE...
...THE HITTITE EMPIRE IS ABOUT TO CLASH WITH EGYPT OVER CONTROL OF THE ORIENT.
THE HITTITE EMPIRE HAS BEGUN MARSHALLING ITS FORCES...


...TO MARCH TO BATTLE FOR THEIR COUNTRY...
...AND THEIR NEW KING.

YURI ISHTAR IS THE DAL MESHED!..
...COMMANDER OF THE EMPIRE'S ROYAL FORCES.
HIS EXCELLENCY WILL BE HERE SHORTLY TO REVIEW HIS TROOPS!
I WANT EACH UNIT TO ORGANIZE IN FILES AND PROCEED!
TRUMP

SHUBBAS, CHIEF OF ARCHERY.
TRUMP
TRUMP
TRUMP
KASH, CHIEF OF CHARIOTS.
SHUFFLE
CLOP
CLOP
SHOOF
MITTANNAMWA, CHIEF OF INFANTRY.
RATTLE
RATTLE

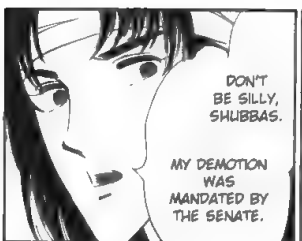
...
S-SORRY, ISHTAR!
ARCHERY UNIT! FORM UP!
OH, TO HAVE RUSAFA BACK!
THE NEW CHIEF'S SO GREEN!
HMM?
OH...YES, I'LL JUST BE A MOMENT.
YOUR MAJESTY.
WE ARE READY TO DEPART.

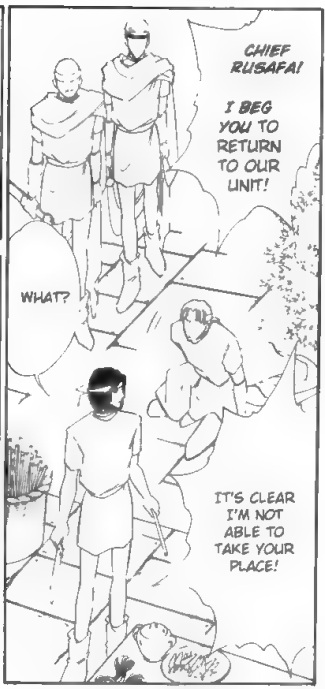
...AT TIMES LIKE THIS TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALLIES...
YES. IT'S IMPORTANT...
LOOK.
MUST HIS EXCELLENCY BE THE ONE TO ESCORT...
...PRINCESS ADDA CHERLATO TO THE BORDER?
...SUCH AS ASSYRIA. THEIR PRINCESS MUST RETURN SAFELY.
KAIL, I MEAN, YOU... PLEASE BE CAREFUL.
I TRUST YOU WILL DO THE SAME, YURI.
I'M SURE YOU KNOW...
...WHY NAKIA WANTED YOU TO BE APPOINTED MY MILITARY COMMANDER...

I KNOW.
BUT NOW MY DEATH CAN ONLY OCCUR ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
IF IT HAPPENS ANYWHERE ELSE, NAKIA WILL BRING MORE TROUBLE ON HERSELF THAN SHE WANTS.
SO DON'T WORRY, KAIL.

I MUST BE THE FIRST KING TO HAVE BEEN KISSED LIKE THIS BY HIS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.
... AND THE LAST, I'D SAY...
WILL YOU COME WITH ME, YURI?
OF COURSE.
THERE'S A MATTER I NEED TO ATTEND TO BEFORE I GO.
IT MUST BE ABOUT [illegible]AFA!
KAIL MUST BE REINSTATING HIM AS THE ARCHERY CHIEF!

CHIEF!


DON'T BE SILLY, SHUBBAS.
MY DEMOTION WAS MANDATED BY THE SENATE.


CHIEF RUSAFA!
I BEG YOU TO RETURN TO OUR UNIT!
WHAT?
IT'S CLEAR I'M NOT ABLE TO TAKE YOUR PLACE!

BUT WAR WITH EGYPT IS IMMINENT.
YOU SHOULD BE LEADING YOUR UNIT.
YOU KNOW I CAN'T.

GENTLEMEN, I'M PLEASED YOU'RE ALL HERE.
YOUR MAJESTY!
PRINCESS YURI!
YOUR MAJESTY, PLEASE REINSTATE RUSAFA!
I...I'M SIMPLY NOT THE UNIT LEADER HE IS!
RUSAFA IS AN ABLE LEADER..
...BUT MILITARY UNITS CAN NEVER DEPEND ON JUST ONE MAN.
THE ARCHERY UNIT IS YOURS, SHUBBAS, SO STOP COMPLAINING...
...AND GET TO WORK.
SO HE'S NOT REINSTATING RUSAFA?

RUSAFA...
...YOUR DAYS...
...LEADING THE ARCHERY UNIT ARE OVER.
O... OVER?
YOUR MAJESTY, I MUST OBJECT...
KAIL!
AS OF TODAY...
WHAT IS HE THINKING?

...I WANT YOU TO FILL THE POSITION OF THE ROYAL ARMY'S...
...DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.
YOU WILL BE YURI ISHTAR'S AIDE.
ISHTAR'S AIDE...
WILL YOU ACCEPT ?
OF COURSE, YOUR MAJESTY!

YES, SIR!
I WILL BE EXPECTING A GREAT DEAL FROM YOU.

I'LL SEE YOU SOON, RUSAFA.
WE HAVE LOTS TO TALK ABOUT.
THAT'S ALL, GENTLE-MEN.
I'LL BE BACK IN ABOUT TEN DAYS.
WHEW!
I KNOW KAIL TRUSTS RUSAFA TO SEE TO MY SAFETY...
...BUT I HAD NO IDEA HE'D ALSO RECEIVE SUCH A WELL-DESERVED PROMOTION!
WHACK
...
BETTER HIM THAN SHUBBAS, EH, KASH?
STOP IT.
WELL NOW...
...WHO'S HIS MAJESTY'S FAIR-HAIRED BOY?

NO, I SHOULDN'T.
THERE'S A NEW BAR IN TOWN, AND...
WE'VE GOTTA CELE-BRATE!
I'M STILL UNDER SENATE PROBATION.
PUBLIC CAROUSING ON MY PART COULD RAISE EYEBROWS, AND LEAD TO TROUBLE FOR HIS MAJESTY AND PRINCESS YURI.
WHY NOT?
HUH?
SURE.
NOW I'D BETTER GO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRANSFER.
CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.
NEXT TIME, THOUGH, THE FIRST ROUND'S ON YOU.

RUSAFA'S NOW MY DEPUTY!
HIS SKILLS CAN NOW BE PUT TO REAL USE!
I'M SURE NAKIA'S HATCHING NEW PLOTS EVEN NOW, BUT SHE WON'T FIND ME EASY PICKINGS!

A NOBLE LADY?
WHY IS NO ONE WITH HER?
EXCUSE ME, MA'AM...
...IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG?

UH... I HAVE A PAIN IN MY CHEST.
WILL YOU PLEASE WALK ME HOME?
I'D BE HAPPY TO. WHERE IS YOUR HOUSE?
YOU ARE...
HERE, LET ME HELP YOU.
...RUSAFA, CHIEF OF THE ARCHERS...
...CORRECT ?
HUH?
YES... I MEAN, I WAS.
IF YOU ARE RUSAFA...
I SEE.

RIP
RIP
RIP
WHAT...
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
EEEEE!

HEY, WAIT!
EEEE!
HELP! SOMEBODY, HELP ME!
STOP! I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING!
THE SENATE WILL DEAL WITH YOU!
YOU ARE... ...SENATOR ODE'S DAUGHTER!
HOW DARE THIS MISCREANT ATTACK A NOBLE LADY!
HUH!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
THAT MAN! HE ATTACKED ME!
HE'S LYING!
HE STALKED ME, AND TRIED TO ASSAULT ME!

SHE'S...
...BEING CONTROLLED!
BY THE QUEEN DOWAGER!

RUSAFA ATTACKED A WOMAN ON THE STREET?
THAT'S *RIDICULOUS!* IT CAN'T BE TRUE!
OF COURSE IT CAN'T!
BUT THE SENATE IS SET TO TRY HIM FOR THE CRIME!
YOU'RE TO ATTEND IN YOUR CAPACITY AS DAL MESHED!
THE SENATE

HOW DID YOU IMAGINE YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO GET AWAY WITH TWO CAPITAL CRIMES?
FORMER CHIEF OF THE ARCHERY UNIT, RUSAFA!
YOU WERE ONLY JUST PARDONED FOR HAVING KIDNAPPED YURI ISHTAR. NOW YOU STAND CHARGED WITH ATTACKING A NOBLEWOMAN!
PLEASE EXPLAIN AGAIN WHAT HAPPENED, MY DEAR.
BUT THIS INJURY TO MY DAUGHTER CANNOT BE DISMISSED!
BELIEVE ME, WE WISH TO CONDEMN NO ONE OUT OF HAND!
AND TRY HIM WE WILL, ISHTAR!
YOU'RE HERE TO *TRY* RUSAFA, NOT CONDEMN HIM!
SENATORS, PLEASE WAIT!
...*TORE MY CLOTHES* AND PINNED ME TO THE GROUND!
...THAT MAN...
YES...

ACCORDING TO THE LAW, WE MUST EXECUTE...
WAIT!
UNTIL LATELY RUSAFA'S CONDUCT WAS ABOVE REPROACH! WHY HAS THAT CHANGED?
WHY NOT HAVE THE MATTER DECIDED UNDER THE SCORCHING SUN?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER? MY DAUGHTER HAS BEEN VIOLATED!
HER EYES!
SHE'S BEING CONTROLLED BY NAKIA!

MUR-MUR
YOUR HIGH-NESS!
MURMUR MURMUR
...IF THIS MAN IS GUILTY OF THIS HEINOUS CRIME.
WE MAY LET THE GODS DECIDE...
NAKIA BUTTS IN AGAIN!
...NO ONE HAS EVER SURVIVED IT.
IT... IT'S A WAY OF DETERMINING A SUSPECT'S GUILT, BUT...
WHAT DOES SHE MEAN?

...
YOUR HIGHNESS!
WHY DO YOU PLAGUE *RUSAFA* LIKE THIS?
IT'S *MY LIFE* YOU WANT!
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
YOU MUST BE CONFUSED, OR PERHAPS YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT LOSING YOUR DEPUTY JUST BEFORE GOING TO WAR.
SMILE
SO THAT'S IT.
SHE DOESN'T EVEN CARE THAT I SEE THROUGH HER!

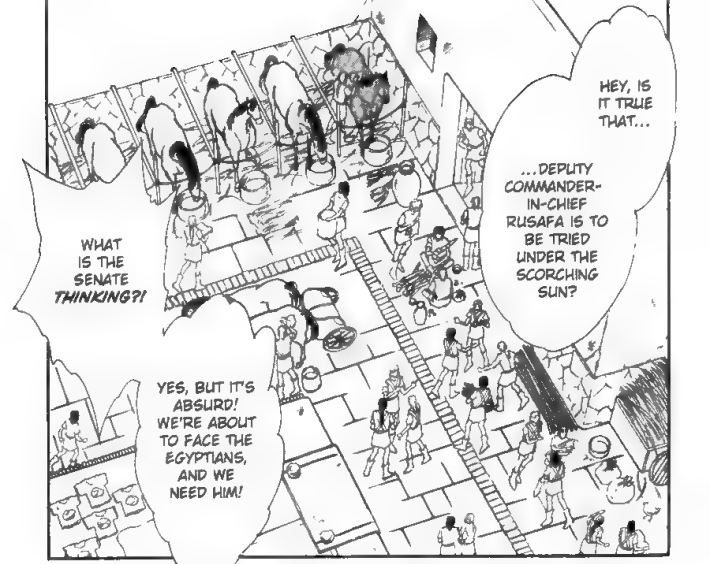
SHE CAN MANEUVER ME INTO ANY SITUATION SHE LIKES...
...AND WITH RUSAFA PREVENTED FROM ACCOMPANYING ME...
...I'LL BE FAR MORE VULNERABLE TO WHATEVER SHE HAS PLANNED FOR ME ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.
DESTROYING RUSAFA HIMSELF IS JUST ICING ON THE CAKE!

Y... YES, MA'AM.
TAKE HIM TO THE TEST SITE.
AS DAL MESHEDI, I WILL NOT ALLOW THIS!
DON'T!
EVEN THE DAL MESHEDI CANNOT OVERRULE ME.
OR PERHAPS...
...I HOLD THE HIGHEST POSITION OF AUTHORITY IN HATTUSA.
YOU FORGET I AM THE TAWAN-NANA.
IN THE KING'S ABSENCE ...

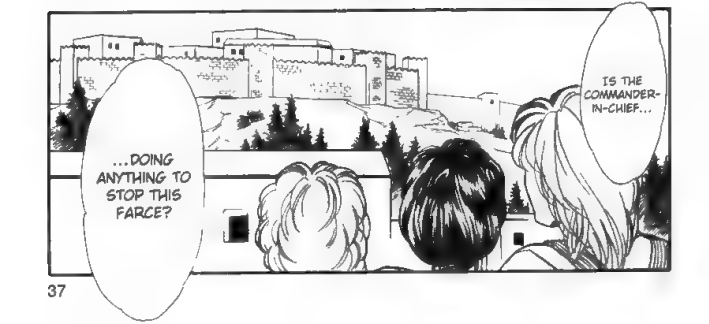
...YOU'RE SUGGESTING THAT YOU ...
...THE KING'S CONCUBINE, CAN OVERRULE THE TAWAN-NANA?
THE KING'S CONCUBINE... OVERRULE...
ENOUGH OF THIS! TAKE HIM AWAY!

PRINCESS YURI...
I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS, KASH.
NAKIA OUTRANKS ME, BUT SHE SEEMS TO THINK SHE CAN ALSO INTIMIDATE ME. SHE IS MISTAKEN.
I WILL NOT LET RUSAFA DIE BY HER ORDER!

TITO, PRINCE ZANNANZA AND URSULA ALL DIED BECAUSE OF YOU! NOW YOU WOULD CLAIM RUSAFA!
NAKIA, YOU MURDEROUS HAG!
WELL, NO MORE! I AM NOW YOUR NEMESIS!


HEY, IS IT TRUE THAT...
...DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RUSAFA IS TO BE TRIED UNDER THE SCORCHING SUN?
WHAT IS THE SENATE *THINKING?!*
YES, BUT IT'S ABSURD! WE'RE ABOUT TO FACE THE EGYPTIANS, AND WE NEED HIM!

BUT IT'S A TRIAL. HE MIGHT BE ACQUITTED.
...SURVIVED SUCH A TRIAL! IT'S A *DEATH SENTENCE!*
ACQUITTED? NO ONE'S EVER..


IS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF...
...DOING ANYTHING TO STOP THIS FARCE?

ILBANI.
ILBAN!!
WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS TRIAL?
I KNOW IT'S MEANT TO SEEK A DIVINE RULING ON GUILT OR INNOCENCE, BUT...
WHAT KIND OF ORDEAL IS IT?
...I'M TOLD NO ONE HAS EVER SURVIVED THE TEST ITSELF.
PRINCESS YURI?

WHAT THEY DO IS...
...LASH THE ACCUSED TO THE GROUND AND SEE...
...IF HE CAN SURVIVE FOR FIVE DAYS.
THAT'S HOW THE TRIAL WORKS.
IF HE MANAGES TO FREE HIMSELF, HE WILL BE FOUND INNOCENT.
IF HE DIES, HE WILL BE DECLARED GUILTY.
WIP
IT'S SENSE-LESS...
...BUT A VERY STRONG MAN SHOULD BE ABLE TO...
...SURVIVE FOR FIVE DAYS UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS...
?!

A LEATHER STRAP STRETCHES WHEN IT'S WET.
YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
STRETCH
RUSTLE
HADI'S LEATHER HAIR TIE, BUT...
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?
SPLASH

SO IT SHRINKS WHEN IT'S DRY.
RIGHT...
AN ACCUSED PERSON UNDERGOING THE TRIAL IS TIED BY HIS NECK AND LIMBS...
...WITH WET LEATHER THONGS.
HIS NECK...
WHEN THE LEATHER BAND SHRINKS...
...IT WILL CHOKE HIM!

...AS ARE THOSE WHO SAY NO ONE'S EVER SURVIVED.
YOU'RE RIGHT...
THAT'S HORRIBLE!
THE SUMMER IS HOT AND DRY! HE DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE!
NO MAN COULD TEAR HIMSELF FREE FROM THEM, WET OR DRY.
THE LASHINGS ARE THE SAME AS THOSE USED TO RESTRAIN LIONS.
PRINCESS YURI...
THE TRIAL IS ...
...TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, AN EXECUTION.

THEY CAN'T DO THAT, PRINCESS YURI.
I'LL GO TO THE SENATE!
I'LL DO WHATEVER I MUST TO CONVINCE THE SENATORS TO HALT THIS HORROR!
ONLY HIS MAJESTY HAS THE CAPACITY TO RESCIND IT.
THE TRIAL IS BY ORDER OF THE QUEEN DOWAGER.
YES, MA'AM.
SEND A MESSENGER ANYWAY!
IT WILL BE TOO LATE.
THE TRIAL TAKES PLACE TOMOR-ROW.
THEN SEND A MESSENGER TO KAIL!
TELL HIM HE MUST RETURN TO HATTUSA IMMEDI-ATELY!

I WON'T LET NAKIA *MURDER* ANOTHER INNOCENT PERSON! *I WON'T!*
THIS IS WRONG. THIS IS SO WRONG! NAKIA WANTS RUSAFA OUT OF THE WAY SO IT'S EASIER FOR HER TO KILL ME!
MANY SENATORS DOUBT HIS GUILT! BUT THEY WON'T STOP THE TRIAL!

KNOCK KNOCK
PRIN-CESS YURI.
SQUEAK
IT'S TIME I PREPARED YOUR BED...
EH?

I THINK... SHE MEANS TO RESCUE RUSAFA...
OH, NO!
GASP
BIG SIS!
HER SWORD IS MISSING!
AND WHY?
WHERE IS SHE AT THIS LATE HOUR?
DO IT QUIETLY. WE DON'T WANT THIS TO GET AROUND.
RIGHT!
RYLII! SHALA! INFORM ILBAN! OF THIS!

THREE GUARDS...
IF I CAN DISTRACT THEM, I MIGHT REACH RUSAFA...
MPH!

PRINCESS YURI...
...THIS IS NOT AT ALL ADVISABLE.
NAKIA KNOWS YOU WELL ENOUGH TO EXPECT YOU TO TRY THIS. DON'T PLAY INTO HER HANDS.
BUT THIS IS URSULA ALL OVER AGAIN, ILBANI!
I WON'T STAND BY AND WATCH IT HAPPEN!
!!
THIS IS NOT ABOUT URSULA.
DON'T FORGET THAT YOUR ACTIONS WILL AFFECT HIS MAJESTY'S POSITION.

I MUSTN'T DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HURT KAI...
SLUMP
BUT WHY DOES IT COME DOWN TO EITHER THAT OR LETTING ONE OF MY DEAREST FRIENDS DIE?

THAT POOR, POOR SOUL.
GOING TO TRIAL UNDER THE SCORCHING SUN.
HE'LL MAKE IT.
I'M SURE ISHTAR WILL SAVE HIM.
YES, I'M SURE SHE WILL.
...

THAT MESA'S THE TRIAL SITE?
YES. DO YOU WISH TO GO THERE?
I... I DO!
TAKE ME THERE!

THE GUARDS...
...WILL BIND RUSAFA, THEN COME DOWN AND TAKE THE LADDERS AWAY.
LADDERS?
THE GUARDS WILL WAIT AT THE FOOT OF THE MESA.
YES, TO MAKE SURE NO TRIES TO RESCUE HIM...
...SO HE CAN GET DOWN IF HE MANAGES TO FREE HIMSELF.
THEY'LL LEAVE HIM A ROPE...
KLOP
NO! I WANT TO GO UP TO THE SITE!
DID YOU WANT TO WAIT DOWN HERE?

RUSAFA
...
...THE GODS WILL TELL US IF YOU ARE GUILTY OR NOT.
RIP
RIP
ARE YOU READY? THEN WE'LL BEGIN.
RUSAFA...

SPLASH
SQUEEZE
HOW DO I THWART YOU, NAKIA? HOW DO I STOP YOUR EVIL?
I CAN ONLY WATCH.
SQUEEZE

WHAT NEED DOES IT SATISFY IN YOU...
...TO DESTROY AN INNOCENT MAN BY SUCH TERRIBLE MEANS?

RUSAFA, WE WILL RETURN IN FIVE DAYS.
IF YOU FREE YOURSELF BEFORE THAT, USE THIS ROPE TO COME DOWN.
NAKIA CAN PUNISH ANYONE LOYAL TO THE KING...
...WHEN HE'S ABSENT...
SMASH
THAT'S THE DAL MESHEDI'S FLAG!
WHAT? ISHTAR!

DON'T STOP HER, KASH.
SHE'S ONLY EXPRESSING THE FRUSTRATION WE ALL FEEL!
PRINCESS YURI!!
WUP
WHAT?
!!

YOU HAVE A BLESSING FROM ISHTAR.
I TRUST YOU WILL RETURN TO US...
...RUSAFA.
FLAP
PRINCESS YURI?!

LET US LEAVE RUSAFA IN THE HANDS OF THE GODS.
WHEN WE'RE ALL DOWN, TAKE THE LADDERS AWAY.
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK
UGHHH....

STAY STRONG, MY FRIEND, AND RETURN TO US!
ALL I CAN DO NOW IS PRAY...

HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
THE SCORCHING SUN..
...OF ANATOLIA WILL MAKE SHORT WORK OF RUSAFA.
...THE CLOSER YURI AND KAIL DRAW TO THE ULTIMATE PEACE... OF THE TOMB!
THE MORE LOYAL AIDES THEY LOSE...

CREAK
CREAK
UNNH...

GLARE

CREAK
UNNH...
SLUMP
...YURI...
...PRINCESS YURI!
GASP

OH!
DID I DOZE OFF?
I'M SORRY.
I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
YOU'VE BEEN SITTING IN THIS CHAIR FOR TWO DAYS, SINCE RUSAFA BEGAN THE TRIAL. YOU'RE EXHAUSTED.
NEITHER HAS RUSAFA.
EAT SOME-THING AT LEAST.
YOU HAVE TAKEN NO FOOD OR DRINK FOR TWO DAYS.
NO.
I'LL WAIT HERE FOR RUSAFA'S RETURN.
PRINCESS YURI...
...PLEASE, YOU MUST GET SOME REST.

I'M SORRY.
FOR WHAT?
I COULDN'T STOP THE TRIAL.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!
MY FAULT? NO...
...BUT I OWE THE KING MY VIGILANCE.
I KNOW RUSAFA WILL COME BACK ALIVE.
I WANT TO WAIT FOR HIM HERE.

...A FINE BOY, MEANT TO LEAD HIS TRIBE WHEN HE WAS OF AGE.
TITO !!

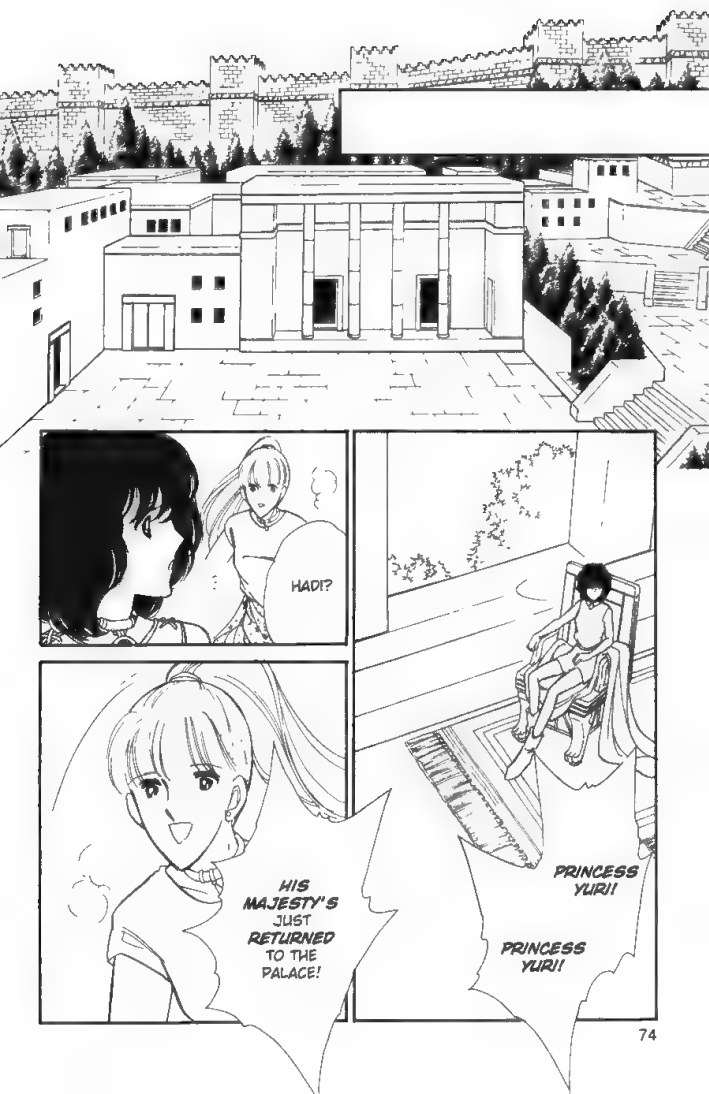
SO
HAHAHA
OMG
HA
HA
THEN PRINCE ZAWANZA WAS KILLED.
I AM THE *TAWANNANA* OF THIS EMPIRE!
I ANSWER TO *NO ONE* BUT THE KING!!

I'LL DIE WISHING THAT ONE DAY...
...AND PRINCESS YURI WILL STAND BESIDE HIM AS QUEEN.
...PRINCE KAIL WILL ASCEND TO THE THRONE...
AND URSULA.

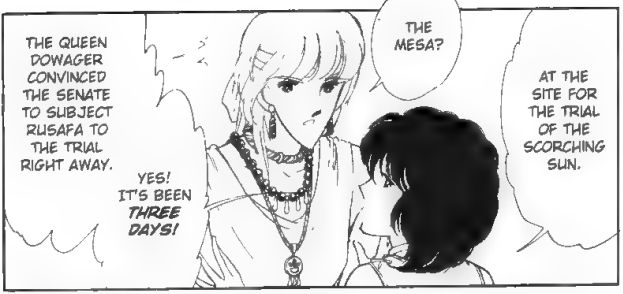
ALL BECAUSE OF NAKIA'S COLD-BLOODED THIRST FOR POWER...
...AND HER DESIRE TO GET AT ME!

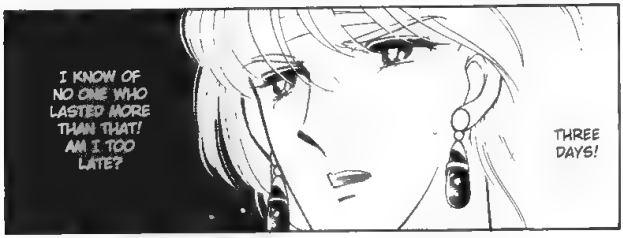
MORE BUZZARDS, CURSE THEM!
IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS.
THE LEATHER THONGS MUST HAVE DRIED COMPLETELY BY NOW.
I DON'T DARE HOPE CHIEF RUSAFA IS STILL ALIVE.

I HATE THIS JOB.
ME, TOO.
CLACK
CLACK
LOOK!


HADI?
HIS MAJESTY'S JUST RETURNED TO THE PALACE!
PRINCESS YURI!
PRINCESS YURI!

HE CAN'T BE BACK SO SOON!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YURI!
I RECEIVED YOUR MESSAGE AT THE BORDER AND RUSHED BACK.
WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S RUSAFA?
KAIL!


THE QUEEN DOWAGER CONVINCED THE SENATE TO SUBJECT RUSAFA TO THE TRIAL RIGHT AWAY.
YES! IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS!
THE MESA?
AT THE SITE FOR THE TRIAL OF THE SCORCHING SUN.


I KNOW OF NO ONE WHO LASTED MORE THAN THAT! AM I TOO LATE?
THREE DAYS!

WHAT?
OPEN THE GATE!
I MUST REPORT TO THE KING!
OH!
KLOP

CONVENE THE SENATE AT ONCE!
AND SUMMON THE QUEEN DOWAGER!
Y...YOUR MAJESTY!
YOUR MAJ-ESTY...
...I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE BACK.
YOU WERE ESCORTING THE ASSYRIAN PRINCESS TO SHOW GOODWILL TO AN ALLY.
SHOULD YOU HAVE LEFT HER BEFORE SHE REACHED THE BORDER?
HOW DARE YOU!

QUIET, YURI. MOTHER, WE'LL DISCUSS GOODWILL LATER.
RIGHT NOW I WISH TO ADDRESS THE PRECIPITATE MANNER IN WHICH YOU AND THE SENATE DEALT WITH RUSAFA.
I AM GOING TO HAVE HIM TAKEN DOWN OFF THE MESA.
GUARDS! BRING RUSAFA TO ME!
KLINK
YOUR MAJESTY!
PRINCESS YURI!
SHE FULLY EXPECTS RUSAFA TO HAVE DIED BY NOW!
SUCH BLATANT HYPO-CRISY!
OH, I DO HOPE RUSAFA HAS MANAGED TO HOLD OUT.
THAT IS FOR YOU TO DECIDE, YOUR MAJESTY.

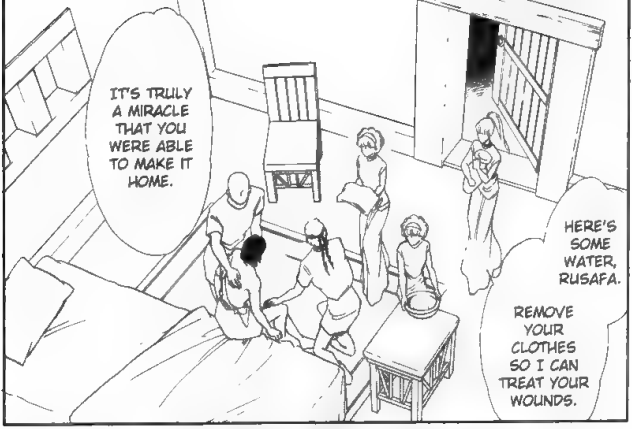
WHAT'S HAPPENED, HADI?
I HAVE A REPORT!
AT THE PALACE'S EAST GATE... HE'S...
YES?
HE'S AT THE EAST GATE! I MEAN THE GUARD HAS TAKEN...
PRINCESS YURI.
SHUE

RUSAFA!

YES, SIR.
AND IT WAS BY...
...THE GRACE OF ISHTAR.
RUSAFA?
YOU... FREED YOURSELF?

HE SHOULD HAVE CHOKED TO DEATH BY NOW!
HOW CAN THIS BE?
FREEING ONESELF IS IMPOSSIBLE!
RUSAFA HAS MADE A SAFE RETURN. THE GODS HAVE PRONOUNCED HIM INNOCENT.
I TRUST EVERYONE IS PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME...
...BECAUSE THIS CASE AGAINST HIM IS NOW CLOSED. FOR GOOD!
RUSAFA...
WE SHALL!
HE NEEDS REST, GENTLEMEN. SEE TO IT.

THEREFORE THE TRIAL OF SUCH PERSONNEL, BY YOU OR THE SENATE, WILL BE CONDUCTED ONLY IN MY PRESENCE, OR IT WILL BE CONSIDERED AN ACT OF TREASON.
YOUR HIGHNESS...
...AT TIMES LIKE THIS THE EMPIRE'S ROYAL ARMY NEEDS EVERY ABLE OFFICER AT ITS DISPOSAL.
HMPH
YURI!
RUSAFA IS BACK...
PHEW
GRAB


IT'S TRULY A MIRACLE THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO MAKE IT HOME.
HERE'S SOME WATER, RUSAFA.
REMOVE YOUR CLOTHES SO I CAN TREAT YOUR WOUNDS.

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO FREE YOURSELF?
...

WHAT'S THIS?
A PIECE OF OBSIDIAN?
IT MAKES A GOOD KNIFE WHEN SHARPENED, BUT THIS BIT'S STILL ROUGH.
SO YOU SECRETED IT ON YOURSELF SOMEHOW.
I'M IMPRESSED!
SLAP
I HAVE NO TALENT FOR SUCH SUBTLETY.
BUT IT COULD STILL CUT THROUGH LEATHER GIVEN ENOUGH TIME.
PRINCESS YUR...
...GAVE THIS TO ME BEFORE SHE LEFT THE MESA.

AH!
SHE GAVE IT TO YOU WHEN...
YOU MEAN AT THE TRIAL SITE?
WHEN COULD SHE HAVE DONE THAT?
...SHE KISSED YOU!
SHE SHAT-TERED THE OBSIDIAN FINIAL ON THE FLAGSTAFF AND SLIPPED YOU THAT SHARD!
AND WHAT QUICK THINKING!
HOW CLEVER!

YES, AND AS SOON AS I WAS ALONE...
KLAK
KLAK
CLENCH

PFT
THUP!
CREAK
...I STARTED HACKING AT THE LEATHER THONGS THAT BOUND ME.

IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO FREE MYSELF, BUT ONCE I DID I USED THE ROPE...
...TO DESCEND FROM THE MESA.

I'LL BRING YOU SOME FOOD LATER, RUSAFA.
OF COURSE NOT. YOU'VE HAD A ROUGH TIME.
NOW I'D LIKE TO REST, IF YOU DON'T MIND.
THANK YOU. I'LL WELCOME IT.
CHNK
WHUMP

AT THAT MOMENT...
...I WOULD HAVE DIED WITH A FULL HEART.

SOMEDAY...
SOMEDAY...
...I WILL
GIVE UP MY
LIFE FOR
HER.
I OWE HER
THAT.

KAIL...
KAIL...
...I'M STILL NOT SURE THAT I'M WORTHY...
...TO SERVE AS TAWANNANA

...I WILL ACCEPT IT, IF IT PLEASES YOU.
BUT I CAN'T FORGIVE NAKIA...
...OR TOLERATE HER AUTHORITY. IF SHE IS REMOVED FROM THAT POSITION...
IS IT WRONG ...
...TO HAVE SUCH THOUGHTS?
FOR BETTER THINGS? NO...

...AS IT SHOWS YOU'RE THINKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT THE EMPIRE'S FUTURE.
...ESPECIALLY...
MORE THAT WE AGREE ON HOW THE EMPIRE SHOULD BE RULED.

NAKIA, THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN IN THE EMPIRE.
SHE KIDNAPPED ME FROM MY OWN TIME...
...AND CONTINUES TO PLOT TO PLACE HER SON ON THE THRONE.
KAIL WON'T BE ABLE TO RULE HIS EMPIRE AS HE WISHES SO LONG AS NAKIA IS THE TAWANNANA!
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF...

NAKIA... THE TAWANNANA...
DAL MESHED!..
...MAY WE HEAR YOUR OPINION?
PLEASE SPEAK, YURI.
YOUR VIEWS ARE IMPOR-TANT.
I'M SORRY.
YES, I SUPPORT HIS MAJESTY REGARDING THE COMING CONFRONTATION WITH EGYPT.
...BEFORE MAKING ANY DEFINITIVE MILITARY MOVES.
IT IS VITAL THAT WE STRENGTHEN OUR ALLIANCES...

ARE YOU NOT ANXIOUS TO UNDERTAKE THE MISSION?
YOU'VE MUCH TO GAIN IF, AS OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, YOU BRING US VICTORY OVER THE EGYPTIANS.
DEFEATING EGYPT...
...WOULD INDEED BE A BOON FOR ME...
...AND NAKIA.
YOU KNOW I AM, HIGH-NESS.
HOWEVER, HIS MAJESTY'S MILITARY STRATEGY TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER MY PERSONAL GOALS
NOTHING LIKE BEING FORCED TO STATE THE OBVIOUS!

AS I HAVE SAID REPEATEDLY, I PREFER WAR ONLY AS A LAST RESORT.
I WOULD LIKE TO WAIT FOR MALI'S REPORT ON THE MOVEMENTS OF EGYPTIAN TROOPS BEFORE I MAKE ANY DECISION.
I HAVE APPOINTED MY BROTHER, MALI PIYASILI, THE MAYOR OF KARKEMISH, AS THE FRONTLINE COMMANDER AND DISPATCHED HIM TO UGARIT.
GOOD CHOICE, MA'AM.
PRINCE PIYASILI AS THE FRONTLINE COMMANDER.

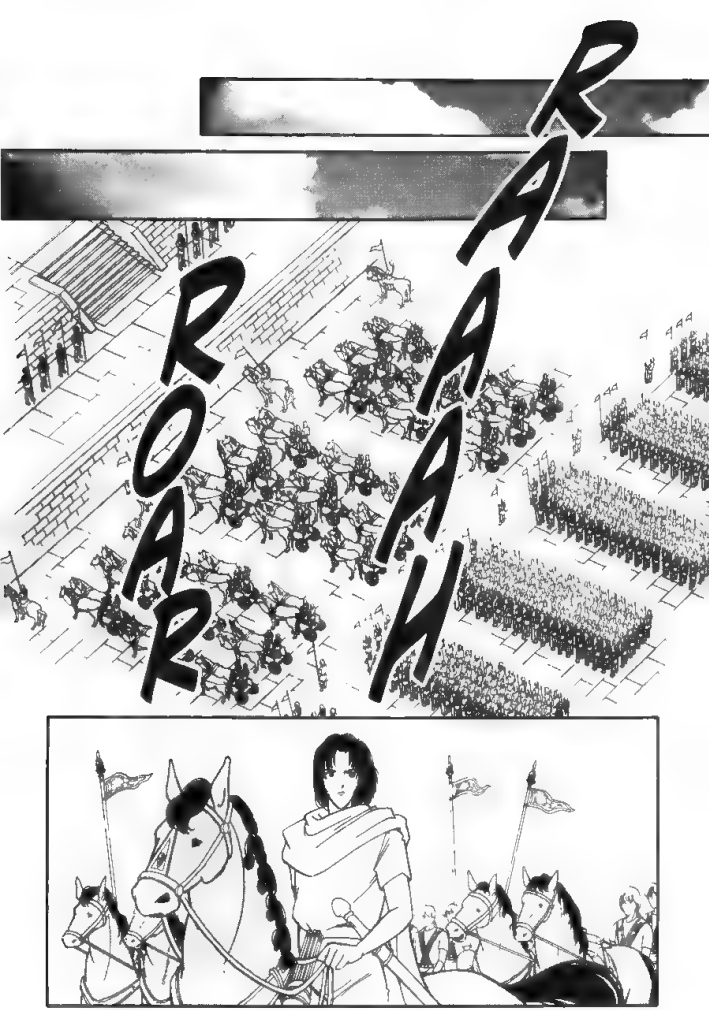
BANG
HEY! THE SENATE IS IN SESSION.
I KNOW, SIR! BUT A COURIER'S BROUGHT AN *URGENT MESSAGE* FROM KARKEMISH!
I HAVE A *REPORT*, SIR!
FWOOMP
WHAT ?!
HE REPORTS THAT PRINCE PIYASILI HAS *GONE MISSING* IN UGARIT!

...IF PRINCE PIYASILI IS INDEED DEAD!
UGARIT IS OUR ALLY, AND MUST FORMALLY NOTIFY US...
HAS HE BEEN KILLED?
MISSING? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
MALI MISSING...
KAIL!
...YOU MUST SEND YOUR ARMY TO UGARIT UNDER THE COMMAND OF A PROMINENT REPRE-SENTATIVE OF THE EMPIRE.
...HOWEVER, NOW THAT ONE OF YOUR BROTHERS IS MISSING...
I KNOW YOU ARE A CAUTIOUS MAN, YOUR MAJESTY ...
IT SEEMS THE MATTER IS DECIDED.

HER HIGHNESS IS RIGHT!
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
UGARIT LIES ON THE BORDER WITH EGYPT!
WE MUST STRENGTHEN OUR POSITION THERE!
KAIL...
...I GUESS THIS IS IT.
THE DAL MESHEDI WILL HEAD FOR UGARIT AT ONCE.
YOU HAVE NO RESER-VATIONS?

RUSTLE
NONE, YOUR MAJESTY.
VERY WELL. I HEREBY ORDER..
...THE HITTITE IMPERIAL ARMY TO ADVANCE...
...TO UGARIT AND PREPARE FOR WAR AGAINST EGYPT!

YURI ISHTAR, YOU ARE IN COMMAND OF THE EXPEDI-TIONARY FORCE.
REPORT TO ME WHEN YOU ARE READY TO MOVE OUT!
RAOR
RAOR
RAOR
RAOR

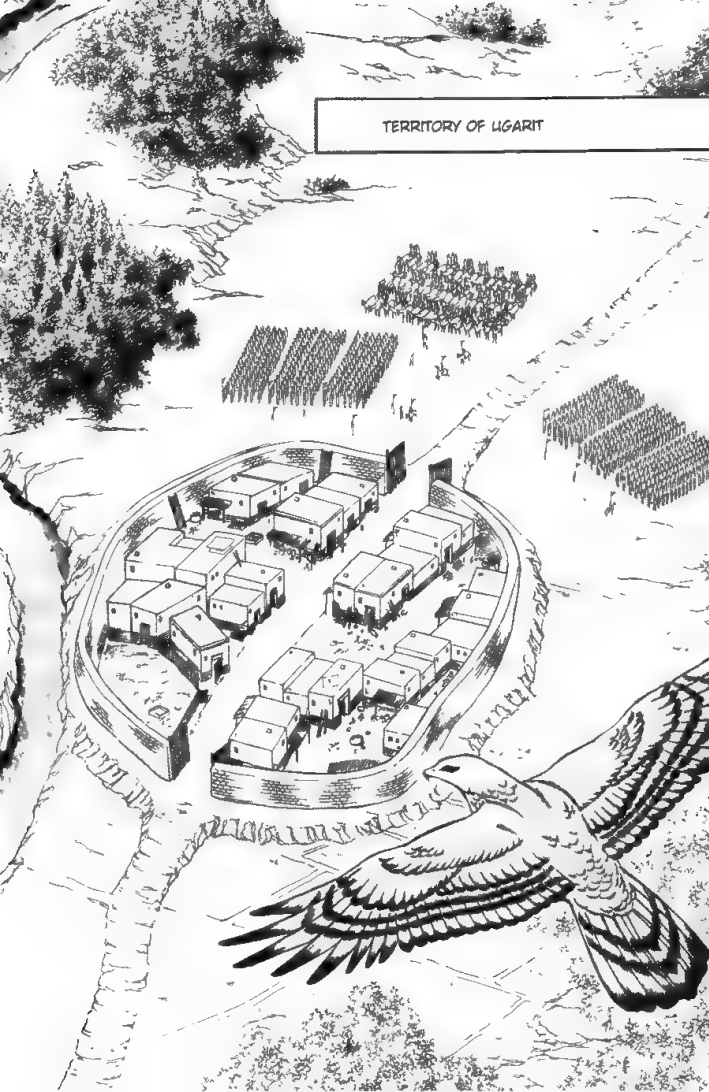

ROAR
AAAH

THE ARMY SEEMS VERY EAGER, YURI.
YES... ...TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY AND KING.
IT WILL TAKE ABOUT EIGHT DAYS TO REACH UGARIT.
WE HAVE LOADED MORE THAN SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES AND...
KAIL?

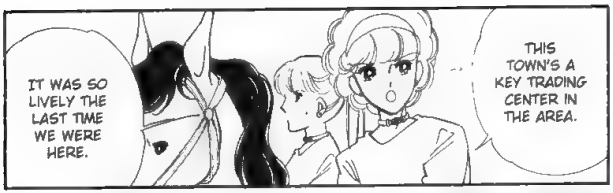
I DIDN'T HESITATE...
...TO DEPLOY TROOPS JUST BECAUSE OF MY PACIFISM.
?!
I WAS RELUCTANT TO...
...SEND YOU TO THE BATTLE-FIELD.
KAIL, YOU...
...LEFT THE DECISION TO ME, REMEMBER?
SO DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE BACK.

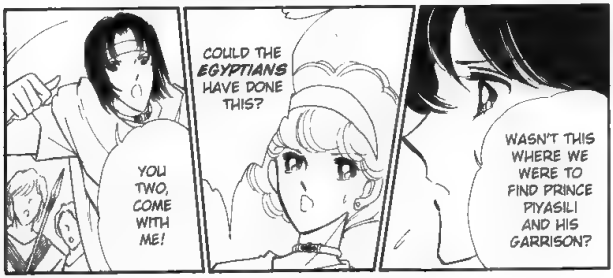
I'LL COME TO UGARIT SOON. SEE YOU THEN.

I DECIDED TO BECOME DAL MESHEDI.
I MADE THAT DECISION IN ORDER TO...
...FORCE A SHOWDOWN WITH NAKIA!


TERRITORY OF UGARIT

CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
ISHTAR..
I SEE IT, RUSAFA.
THE TOWN'S EMPTY. IN FACT...
...WE'VE SEEN NO ONE SINCE WE ENTERED UGARIT'S TERRITORY.
WHIRR


IT WAS SO LIVELY THE LAST TIME WE WERE HERE.
THIS TOWN'S A KEY TRADING CENTER IN THE AREA.


YOU TWO, COME WITH ME!
COULD THE EGYPTIANS HAVE DONE THIS?
WASN'T THIS WHERE WE WERE TO FIND PRINCE PIYASILI AND HIS GARRISON?

WELL?

BLACK SEA
UGARIT IS A KEY CENTER OF TRADE ON THE BORDER WITH EGYPT.
HITTITE
UGARIT
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
EGYPT
THEY WOULDN'T NORMALLY LEAVE ANY TOWN DESERTED AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
...
MUCH HAS BEEN DIS-TURBED...
...AND ALL FOOD AND VALUABLES ARE GONE, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF FIGHTING.
IT LOOKS LIKE THE VILLAGERS SIMPLY FLED.

IF SO...
IS IT POSSIBLE UGARIT'S KING HAS BETRAYED US?
THE EGYPTIANS COULD JUST MARCH RIGHT IN HERE.
CLOP CLOP
PRINCESS YURI! A RIDER!
CLOP CLOP CLOP
I THINK IT'S A MESSENGER!
CLACK
WHINNY
I... I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM KING ARHALBA...
...OF UGARIT... TO THE... NEWLY ARRIVED HITTITE FORCES!

"PLEASE COME TO THE KING'S CASTLE."
AND THIS MESSAGE IS...?
"WE HUMBLY AWAIT YOUR ARRIVAL." THIS IS THE MESSAGE.
THAT'S IT?
WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?
AND WHY ARE THERE NO PEOPLE HERE?
P...PLEASE, I DON'T KNOW! I WAS JUST ORDERED TO BRING YOU THAT MESSAGE!
WHERE IS THE CASTLE?
IT...IT'S LOCATED JUST OVER THAT HILL, MA'AM!
ISHTAR, I...

YES, MA'AM!
RUSAFA, SEND SCOUTS TO RECON-NOITER!
PLEASE FORGIVE ME!
I HAVE TO OBEY THE KING'S ORDERS, OR MY FAMILY WILL BE KILLED!
WHAT ?!
I GATHER YOU AREN'T A SOLDIER.
CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

COULD BE...
A RETURNING SCOUT?
PRINCESS YURI!
A HORSE IS APPROACHING!
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
RUSAFA!
WHAT ORDERS DO YOU MEAN?
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
...THERE'S NO RIDER!
WAIT A MINUTE...
AND IT'S STUMBLED TO THE GROUND!
THUD

WHINNY
SNIFF
IS IT ONE OF OURS?
YES, IT IS. I SEE NO WOUND...
...BUT SOMETHING'S DEFINITELY WRONG WITH IT!
IF THAT HORSE IS DOWN, THEN...
...WHAT ABOUT THE RIDER?

A HAND...?
PRINCESS YURI!
KLAKKA!
WHAT THE...?!

OMIGOD!
...P
...POISON-
OUS...
ISH...
ISHTAR...
BE
CAREFUL...
SNAKES...
ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?
WHAT
HAP-
PENED
?!
DID HE
SAY
SNAKES
?
RUSTLE
IS THAT
A SNAKE
BITE?

!!
TRUP
YIKES!
...?!

THEY'RE ALL OVER THE PLACE!
AND BLOCKING THE WAY TO THE CASTLE!

HSSSS
HSSSS
WEIRD...
...THAT THERE'S SO MANY.
DO SNAKES SWARM, OR WERE THEY—
PRIN-CESS YURI!
WHY'D YOU RIDE OFF?!
PLEASE DON'T DO THAT! IT'S TOO DAN—

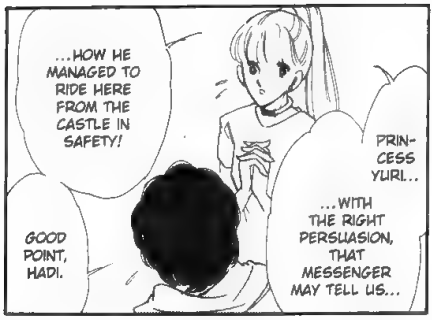
EXPLAINS WHAT?!
AH!
THAT EXPLAINS IT!
HUH?
WATCH OUT!
HSSSSS
THESE ARE VIPERS!
AND THE VENOM OF THIS TYPE IS FATAL!

THUMP
ASLAN!
THEIR POISON CAN KILL YOU TOO!
STOP IT, ASLAN!
SNORT
RUSAFA.
LOOK AT THAT.
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP

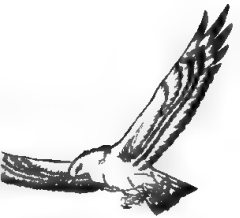
I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY SNAKES IN ONE PLACE.
IT CAN'T BE NATURAL.
OUR SCOUTS HAD NO IDEA WHAT THEY WERE RIDING INTO.
AMAZING!
SEE THE BURNT TREES?
THAT KEEPS THEM ON THE GROUND.
IT'S PLAIN...
...THAT SOMEONE PUT THESE SNAKES HERE AS A TRAP.

WOULD...
...KING ARHALBA HAVE DONE THIS?
...
KAIL ORDERED UGARIT TO BUILD A DEFENSIVE LINE IN ANTICIPATION OF AN EGYPTIAN INCURSION.
PRINCE PIYASILI WAS SENT HERE TO SECURE THE LINE, WITH THE COOPERATION OF UGARIT'S KING.
CLEARLY, SOMETHING'S GONE HAYWIRE.

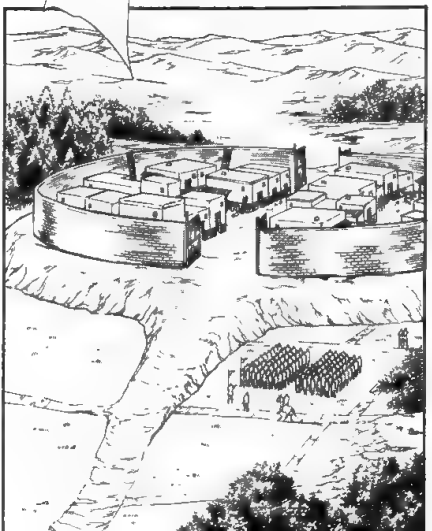
RUSTLE
I MUST MEET KING ARHALBA RIGHT AWAY!
PERHAPS HE CAN ALSO TELL US ABOUT PRINCE PIYASILI.
WE CAN'T HOPE TO ESTABLISH A GOOD DEFENSIVE LINE WITHOUT HIS HELP.
HANG ON, RUSAFA!
DON'T DO ANYTHING YET!
WHEN WAR...
...THREATENS...
NO! IT'S FAR TOO DANGEROUS!
THERE IS NO OTHER OPTION, ISHTAR.
WHEN WAR THREATENS, SOLDIERS DO WHAT THEY MUST.
HUH?
THEN I'LL HAVE MY SOLDIERS GET RID OF THE SNAKES.


...HOW HE MANAGED TO RIDE HERE FROM THE CASTLE IN SAFETY!
PRINCESS YURI...
...WITH THE RIGHT PERSUASION, THAT MESSENGER MAY TELL US...
GOOD POINT, HADI.

BUT SEE TO OUR SCOUTS FIRST.
WE MAY YET SAVE THEIR LIVES!
AT ONCE, ISHTAR!



SHREEEEEE



I WAS TOLD TO WAIT HERE FOR THE HITTITE TROOPS.
I DIDN'T COME FROM THE CASTLE, MA'AM.
I REALLY KNOW NOTHING ELSE!
LET ME ASK YOU THIS, THEN...
I REALLY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. PLEASE FORGIVE ME.
DO YOU KNOW IF PRINCE PIYASILI IS IN THE CASTLE?
I HAVE NO IDEA, SIR.
THE KING ORDERED YOU TO DO THAT?
THEN TELL US ABOUT THE KING! IS HE ALL RIGHT?

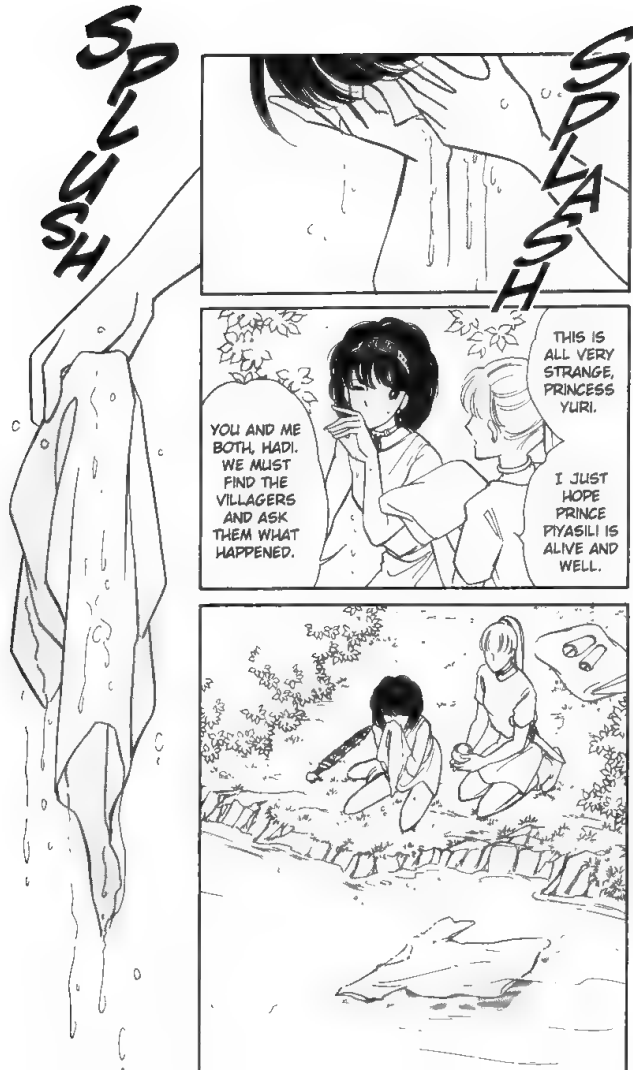
GASP
I CAN'T IMAGINE THE WHOLE POPULATION OF UGARIT NOW RESIDES IN THAT CASTLE.
DID THE KING ORDER THEM TO LEAVE THE TERRITORY?
...WHERE HAVE THE VILLAGERS GONE?
NOT JUST THIS VILLAGE, BUT ALL THE VILLAGES WE'VE PASSED HAVE BEEN DESERTED.
EARLIER, YOU SAID YOUR FAMILY WOULD BE KILLED IF YOU DIDN'T DO AS THE KING SAID.
I... I REALLY DON'T KNOW, MA'AM.
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
WHAT?!
ALL RIGHT...
...YOU MAY GO NOW.
I AGREE...
...BUT I DON'T THINK WE CAN RAISE THE STAKES ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM TALK.
PRINCESS YURI, THAT MAN IS LYING!
I'M SURE HE KNOWS SOMETHING!

RUSAFA.
TELL ME ABOUT KING ARHALBA. WHAT'S HE LIKE?
...IS DEVOTED TO LOOKING AFTER HIS ONLY DAUGHTER.
AFTER HIS YOUNG WIFE DIED, HE NEVER REMARRIED. HIS PERSONAL LIFE...
HE IS SAID TO BE A MODERATE MAN AND IS KNOWN AS A VIRTUOUS RULER.
ONE THING'S CLEAR..
...THIS LAND IS IN THE GRIP OF SOMETHING TERRIBLE.

B-BMP
WIP
OF COURSE, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE NEED.
MEAN-WHILE, HIS COUNTRY IS COMPLETELY UNPREPARED TO STAND AGAINST EGYPT.
WE NEED A RECON OF THE EGYPTIAN FRONT LINES.
I BELIEVE THE VILLAGERS ARE HIDING SOMEWHERE NOT TOO FAR FROM HERE.
YOU'RE RIGHT, ISHTAR! ABSO-LUTELY!
THUD THUD
SO WE'LL SEND MEN TO LOOK FOR THEM?
OF COURSE! I'LL DO THAT RIGHT NOW!
I'LL GO WASH MY FACE.
MAY I ESCORT YOU...
HOLD YOUR HORSES, RUSAFA!
GRAB
LISTEN UP!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOU ARE THE DEPUTY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF?
YES. WHY?
DON'T TUG!
LOOK AT YOURSELF! IF YOUR JOB WAS JUST TO AGREE TO EVERYTHING SHE SAYS, A FIVE-YEAR-OLD COULD DO IT!

STOP TUGGING!
YOU MUST DO MORE THAN...
GRAB
WHAT'S THIS?
ISN'T THAT THE OBSIDIAN SHARD PRINCESS YURI GAVE YOU THAT SAVED YOUR LIFE?
YOU MADE A PENDANT OUT OF IT?!
I DID! NOW HANDS OFF!
...WE ALL KNOW YOU ADORE PRINCESS YURI.
RUSA-FA...
BUT DON'T SHIRK YOUR DUTY AS HER DEPUTY.
BUT TELL ME, HAS PRINCESS YURI EVER MADE A MISTAKE IN THE PAST?
I KNOW MY DUTY, THANK YOU!
YOU KNOW SHE HASN'T! SO IT'S NOT OUR PLACE TO CHALLENGE HER JUDGMENT!

MY ROLE AS HER DEPUTY IS...
...TO TRANSLATE HER INSTRUCTIONS INTO ACTION.
QUESTIONING HER, IN MY VIEW, IS TANTAMOUNT TO INSUBORDINATION.
AND...
AND?
I KNOW THAT...
...MY PARAMOUNT DUTY...
SQUEEZE
...WILL BE TO DIE FOR HER, IF NECESSARY.


SPLASH
SPLUSH
THIS IS ALL VERY STRANGE, PRINCESS YURI.
I JUST HOPE PRINCE PIYASILI IS ALIVE AND WELL.
YOU AND ME BOTH, HADI. WE MUST FIND THE VILLAGERS AND ASK THEM WHAT HAPPENED.

SPLASH
I GUESS...
...SOMEONE LOST THEIR WASHING.
HUH! A SHIRT.
...ENCAMPED UPSTREAM FROM HERE.
IF THAT'S SO, THERE MUST BE PEOPLE...
Y...YES, MA'AM!
WE MAY FIND THE VILLAGERS THERE!
RUSAFA!
TAKE A SCOUTING PARTY UPSTREAM!
GASP

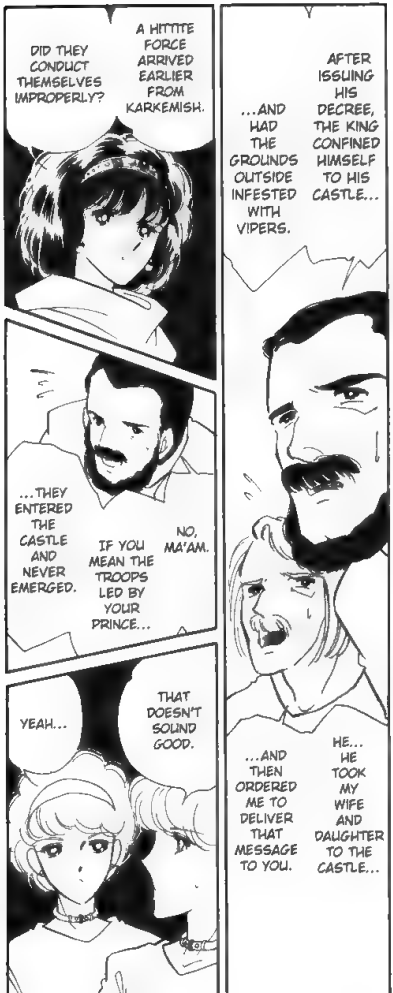
RUSTLE
AH!
ISHTAR!
WE'VE FOUND THEM!
GOOD CALL.
THANKS.

FLAP
AS YOU SAY, ISHTAR.
BRING THEM BACK HOME...
...BUT BE TACTFUL. WE DON'T WANT TO SPOOK THEM.
WE JUST WANT YOU TO RETURN TO YOUR VILLAGE.
WAIT!
WE'RE YOUR ALLIES!
YAAAH!
PLEASE, DON'T KILL ME!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUN FROM US!
HITTITE SOLDIERS! THEY'RE COMING AFTER US!

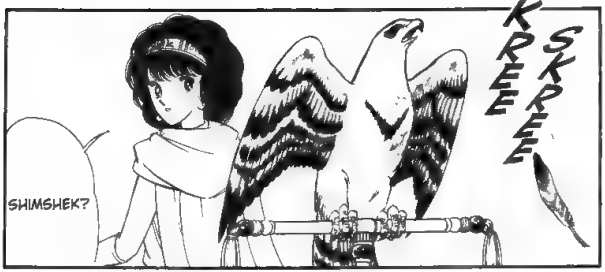
WHY ARE THESE PEOPLE...
...SO FRIGHTENED OF US?

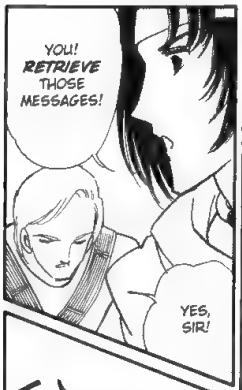
I WANT HIM TO STEP FORWARD!
WHERE IS YOUR MAYOR?
YOU THINK WE'RE HERE FOR THAT?
YOU CAN HAVE SOME OF OUR GIRLS, BUT PLEASE SPARE THE REST.
I BEG YOU NOT TO KILL MY PEOPLE.
...I'M THE MAYOR.
I'M...
HUH?
...BUT I THINK YOU'VE BEEN MIS-INFORMED.
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON...
MAYOR...
...I'M THE COMMANDER OF THIS ARMY.

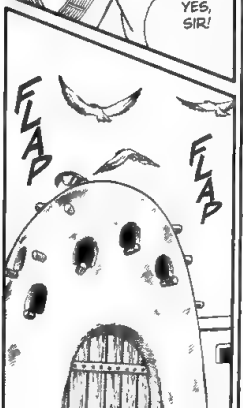
YOU'RE... THE COMMANDER?
YEP.
TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENED.
WE...WE WERE TOLD BY OUR KING THAT...
...THE HITTITES WERE COMING TO KILL US, AND WE WERE TO HIDE OURSELVES.


DID THEY CONDUCT THEMSELVES IMPROPERLY?
A HITTITE FORCE ARRIVED EARLIER FROM KARKEMISH.
...THEY ENTERED THE CASTLE AND NEVER EMERGED.
IF YOU MEAN THE TROOPS LED BY YOUR PRINCE...
NO, MA'AM.
YEAH...
THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.
...AND HAD THE GROUNDS OUTSIDE INFESTED WITH VIPERS.
AFTER ISSUING HIS DECREE, THE KING CONFINED HIMSELF TO HIS CASTLE...
...AND THEN ORDERED ME TO DELIVER THAT MESSAGE TO YOU.
HE... HE TOOK MY WIFE AND DAUGHTER TO THE CASTLE...
HE SAID THE HITTITES WOULD MASSACRE OUR MEN AND RAPE OUR WOMEN.
HE LAMENTED THAT THE ALLIANCE WITH THE HITTITES...
...HAD BEEN A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

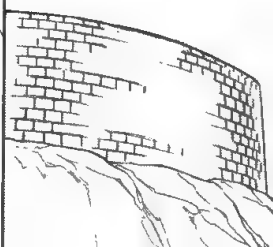
SOMETHING'S TURNED KING ARHALBA AGAINST US...
PRACTICALLY OVERNIGHT!
SOMEONE'S MISLED HIM... AND I BET I KNOW WHO!
THEY'RE RIGHT! THIS IS BAD!







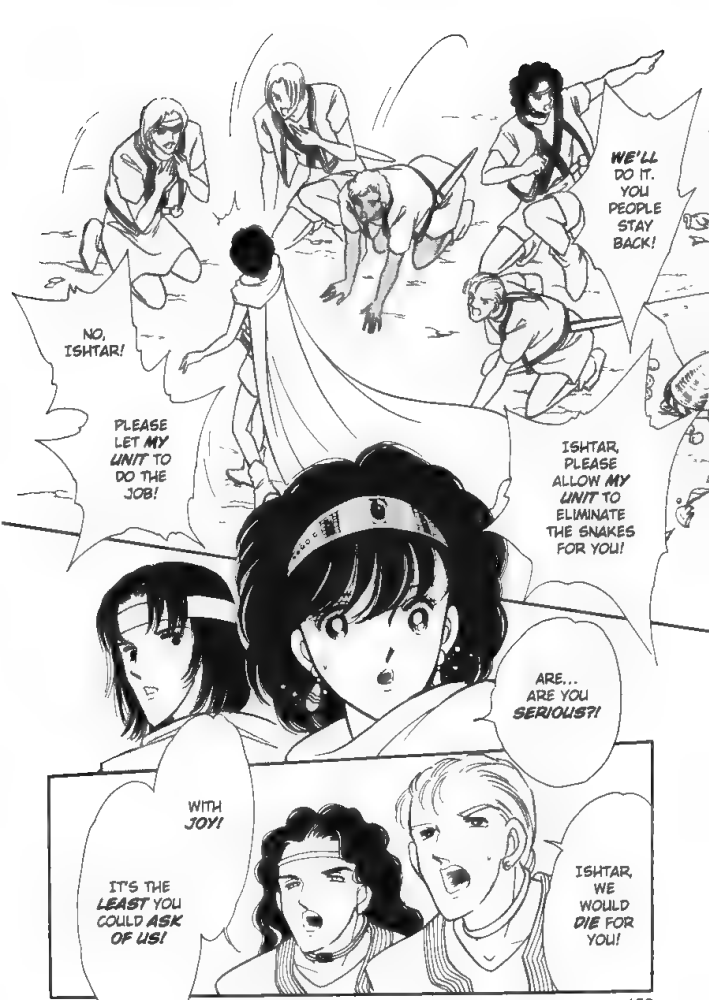
CARRIER PIGEONS. THEY'RE USED TO DELIVER MESSAGES BETWEEN THE CASTLE AND THE VILLAGES.



HERE THEY ARE, SIR.
WHAT DO THEY SAY?
IS KING ARHALBA ADDRESS-ING US?
YES, HE IS.
THERE'S ONE MESSAGE IN FIVE PIECES, SO...
AH, HERE WE GO...
"KING ARHALBA OF UGARIT DECLARES THE FOLLOW-ING...
...TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE HITTITE FORCES."

"YOU ARE TO APPEAR AT THE CASTLE BEFORE SUNSET TOMORROW."
"IF YOU DO NOT, I WILL EXECUTE YOUR KING'S BROTHER, PRINCE PIYASILI."
WHAT? HE CAN'T!
"THE VENOMOUS SNAKES SHOULD NOT HINDER YOU."
"USE VILLAGERS TO GET RID OF THE SNAKES, AND LET THEIR DEAD BODIES..."
"...FORM A BRIDGE TO MY CASTLE. A CRUEL PEOPLE LIKE YOU SHOULD HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT DOING THIS."
THAT'S WHAT THE MESSAGE SAYS.

NOW HE THINKS WE'RE... DESPICABLY EVIL!
KING ARHALBA WAS A LOYAL ALLY!
AND HE THINKS WE'D TRY TO REACH THE CASTLE THAT WAY...?!
HE'LL EXECUTE PRINCE PIYASILI?
HE CAN'T MEAN IT! HE MUST'VE LOST HIS MIND!
THEY'RE GOING TO MAKE US REMOVE THE SNAKES FOR THEM.
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
OH, THERE'S NO DOUBT OF IT. LOOK AT THEM, PLOTTING OUR DEATHS!
I'M NOT DOING IT! I WON'T!
WE'RE NOT GOING TO ASK YOU TO DO ANY SUCH THING!


WE'LL DO IT. YOU PEOPLE STAY BACK!
NO, ISHTAR!
PLEASE LET MY UNIT TO DO THE JOB!
ISHTAR, PLEASE ALLOW MY UNIT TO ELIMINATE THE SNAKES FOR YOU!
ARE... ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
WITH JOY!
IT'S THE LEAST YOU COULD ASK OF US!
ISHTAR, WE WOULD DIE FOR YOU!

PLEASE ORDER US TO DO IT!
I SEE.
THANK YOU, BUT NO.
PRIN-CESS YURI...
...I DON'T MEAN TO ARGUE, BUT WE MUST DEAL WITH THOSE SNAKES SOMEHOW.
THAT'S RIGHT...
...WE MUST ASSUME KING ARHALBA MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.

KING ARHALBA ...
...MAY MEAN IT, BUT ONLY AS A TEST.
IF WE SACRIFICE LIVES TO ELIMINATE THE SNAKES...
...HE WILL TAKE IT AS PROOF THAT WE *ARE* HEARTLESS.
IF WE FIND ANOTHER WAY, HE MAY *DOUBT* HIS SUSPICIONS.

BUT ISHTAR...
I'M NOT HAVING ANYONE DIE JUST TO CLEAR OUT SOME SNAKES.
TOO LATE.
ISHTAR, DON'T WORRY ABOUT US!
...PRINCE PIYASILI TO BE EXECUTED BY THIS KING'S ORDER.
I WILL ALSO NOT ALLOW...
BUT HOW?
DO YOU HAVE A PLAN, ISHTAR?
YOU'RE GOING TO THE CASTLE?!

SMILE
I THINK I DO.
AND I BELIEVE IT WILL WORK.

PRIN-
CESS
YURI!
HOW
CAN WE
ELIMINATE
THE
SNAKES...
...WITHOUT
USING
SOLDIERS
OR
VILLAGERS?
WE'LL
SIMPLY
USE...
...SOMETHING
ELSE.
WUP
PRINCESS
YURI?

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
SHIMSHEK?
SHIMSHEK!

THE RAPTORS OF THIS AREA...
...EAT SNAKES, DON'T THEY?
OH!
WOO
SMILE
ALL RIGHT, SHIMSHEK!
GO!
SHI!

FWEEE

SKREEEE
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
SHIMSHEK'S INTRUSION IN THEIR TERRITORY HAS UPSET THE LOCAL HAWKS! THEY'RE FLYING THIS WAY!

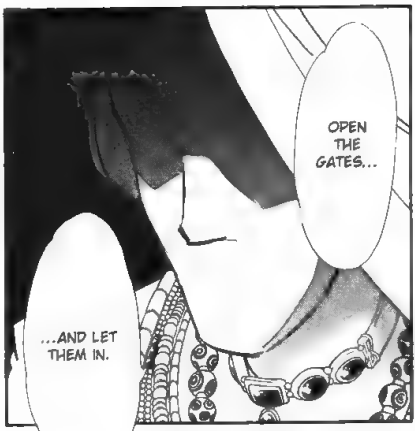
SCREECH
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
THEY'RE KILLING THE SNAKES!

I DON'T KNOW HOW KING ARHALBA WAS TURNED AGAINST US, BUT HE'S WRONG. WE AREN'T A CRUEL PEOPLE.
AND KAIL... KING MURSILI II... HATES MEANINGLESS BLOODSHED.
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
I'M GOING TO SET KING ARHALBA STRAIGHT ABOUT THAT!

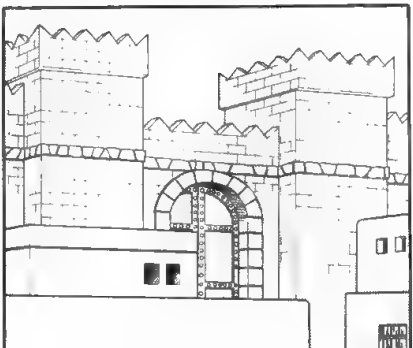
THE WAY'S CLEAR! WE CAN REACH THE CASTLE!
NOW I THINK ON IT...
...THE HITTITES HAVEN'T ACTUALLY THREATENED US IN ANY WAY!
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
SHE DID IT WITHOUT HURTING ANYONE.

AYE, ISHTAR!
HITTITES! TO THE CASTLE!

KING ARHALBA'S CASTLE
YOUR MAJESTY!
THE HITTITES ELIMINATED THE SNAKES!
THEY EXPENDED NO LIVES TO DO IT!
THEY'RE NOW AT THE GATES! WHAT DO WE DO?
YOUR MAJESTY...?


OPEN THE GATES...
...AND LET THEM IN.

Y...YES, SIR.



SQUEAK
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP

?!
YOU'RE FUNNY, MINISTER.
INDEED. HAVE SOME MORE WINE.
CACKLE HA HA HA
CACKLE HA HA HA
EEE!
LET ME GO!
WHAT IS ALL THIS?!

THAT'S INSANE!
HE SAID THERE'S NO NEED TO FIGHT EGYPT FOR THE SAKE OF THE HITTITE EMPIRE!
OUR... OUR KING TOLD US NOT TO WORRY!
GRAB
YOU MEN ARE UGARIT SOLDIERS!
YOU SHOULD BE PREPARING TO DEFEND AGAINST THE EGYPTIANS, BUT INSTEAD YOU STAGE AN ORGY?!
IT'S ALL INSANE!
I WAS TOLD KING ARHALBA WAS A VIRTUOUS RULER AND LOVING FATHER, SO HOW COULD HE...
...CONDONE THIS?

WHAT?
THEY WERE BEING HELD PRISONER HERE!
WE FOUND OUR SOLDIERS!
TUMP
YOU'RE SOLDIERS OF KARKEMISH, AREN'T YOU?
ROAR!
ISHTAR!
THAT'S ISHTAR!
P...PRINCE PIYASIL! IS CONFINED IN ANOTHER ROOM!
IS HE ALL RIGHT?
TELL ME...
...WHERE'S YOUR COMMANDER, PRINCE PIYASIL!?

REALLY?!
PRINCESS YURI!
WE'VE FOUND PRINCE PIYASILI, TOO!
PRINCE PIYASILI!
ISHTAR!
ISHTAR, I'M...
...EMBARRASSED BY MY FAILURE.
PRINCE PIYASILI ...
...ARE YOU OKAY? WE WERE WORRIED!

WELL...
JUST TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.
FORGET IT.
I'VE HEARD MUCH ABOUT YOU.
SO THIS IS ISHTAR, EH?
?!
KING ARHALBA!
OH!
TUP

WOBBLE
LET ME EXTEND MY WELCOME TO YOU...
...WHOM THE GODS HAVE SENT TO US.
HE LOOKS SO HAGGARD... AND DISSIPATED!
THAT'S HIM? KING ARHALBA?

SO THE CHAOS HERE PUZZLES YOU?
EXCUSE ME?
YOU WERE SENT A MESSAGE...
...FROM THE HITTITE EMPEROR, MURSILI II...
YOUR MAJESTY!
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF ALL THIS?
WHIIISH!
I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD!
AND SEND IT BACK AS MY REPLY!
HUH ?!
PRINCESS YURI!

PLEASE BE STILL, YOUR MAJESTY!
YOUR MAJESTY!
WHY DO YOU ATTACK ME?
UGARIT AND THE HITTITE EMPIRE ARE ALLIES!
ALLIES?
HOW COULD YOU SAY SUCH A THING...
...AFTER KILLING ENDRA...
...MY ONLY DAUGHTER?! HOW CAN I POSSIBLY ALLY MYSELF WITH HER MURDERERS?!

I SENT HER TO HATTUSA AS A PROSPECTIVE SPOUSAL CANDIDATE FOR YOUR OH-SO-NOBLE KING!
AND HE BRUTALLY MURDERED HER!
HER MURDERERS?!
AND DON'T PRETEND IGNORANCE WITH ME!
THAT'S RIGHT!

OH MY...
KING ARHALBA!
I'VE TOLD YOU TIME AND AGAIN THAT MY BROTHER WOULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING!
...AND THEN TOOK SADISTIC PLEASURE IN KILLING HER!
I KNOW YOUR WOMANIZING KING TOYED WITH ENDRA...
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME!
NO ONE HAD ANY IDEA SHE HAD EVEN BEEN SENT.
YOUR MAJESTY, PRINCESS ENDRA NEVER CAME TO HATTUSA.
HE DID COURT MANY WOMEN BEFORE HE MET PRINCESS YURI, BUT..
HE CALLED OUR KING A WOMANIZER?

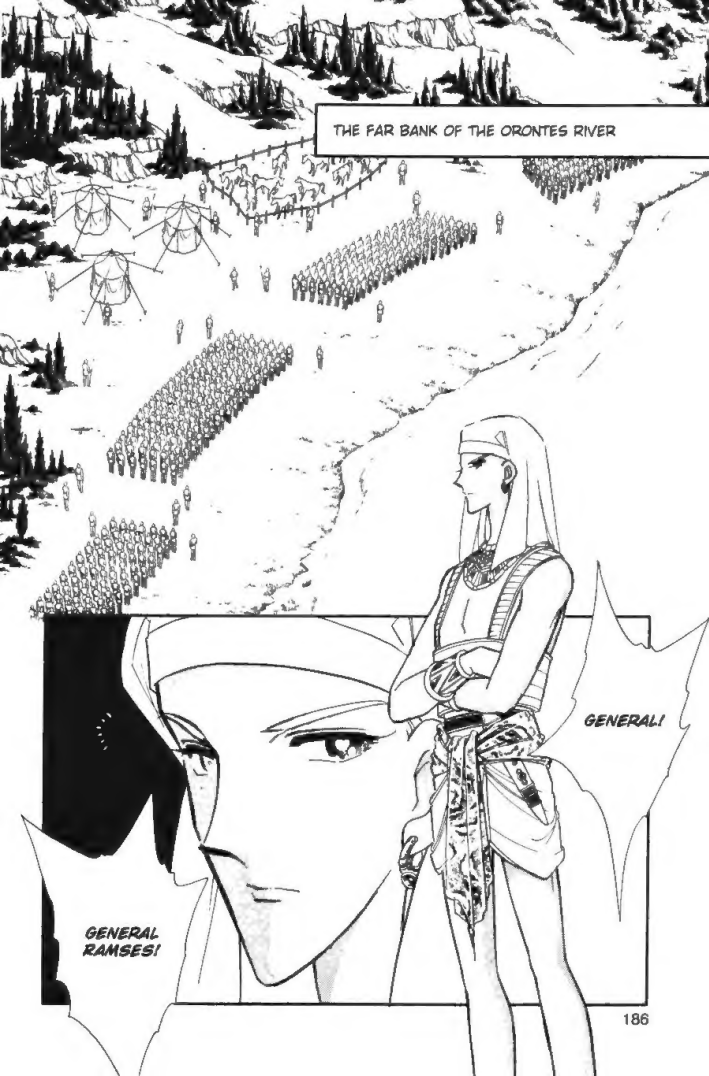
YOUR MAJESTY!
OH DEAR, HE'S DRUNK!
SLUMP
I WATCHED WITH MY OWN EYES AS MY DAUGHTER DEPARTED!
WHEEZE
DON'T LIE TO ME!
AND WE DID RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT KING MURSILI II HAD KILLED HER WITH HIS OWN SWORD.
IT'S TRUE THAT PRINCESS ENDRA LEFT UGARIT AND HEADED FOR HATTUSA.
MAY I INTRODUCE MYSELF, ISHTAR?
MY NAME IS HELON, A MINISTER OF UGARIT.
HELON, WHO SENT YOU THAT MESSAGE?
AFTER THAT, OUR KING GAVE IN TO DESPAIR..
...AND OUR NATION TO MISERY.

YOUR TAWAN-NANA...
...NAKIA, THE QUEEN DOWAGER OF YOUR EMPIRE.
SURELY SHE WOULD GIVE US TRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION.
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH!

I HAVE A REPORT, MA'AM!
HELON, THAT MESSAGE ...
THE RECONNAISSANCE TEAM SENT TO CHECK ON THE EGYPTIANS HAS RETURNED!
OH GOD...
...WE'RE IN NO WAY READY!
THE EGYPTIANS...
...ARE HEADING THIS WAY?
...GATHERING ON THE FAR BANK OF THE ORONTES RIVER!
I MUST ALSO REPORT...
...THAT THE EGYPTIAN FORCES ARE...

THE FAR BANK OF THE ORONTES?!
THAT MEANS THEY'RE PRACTICALLY HERE!
WHO'S THEIR COM-MANDER?
WHO'S LEADING THE EGYPTIAN FORCES?
WE'VE LEARNED HIS NAME IS USER RAMSES.
A NEW GENERAL APPEARS TO BE IN COMMAND, MA'AM.

RAMSES!
TERRIFIC! ONE MORE THING WE DON'T NEED!


THE FAR BANK OF THE ORONTES RIVER
GENERAL!
GENERAL RAMSES!

IT'S STRANGE, SIR. THERE SEEM TO BE NO DEFENSES PREPARED AGAINST US.
WE SUSPECT THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN UGARIT AND THE HITTITES IS BROKEN.
HOW DO THINGS LOOK?
HOW FORTIFIED ARE UGARIT'S DEFENSES?
INDEED?
YES, SIR. HITTITE TROOPS ARRIVED SEVERAL DAYS AGO TO A VERY COLD RECEPTION.
DID YOU FIND OUT WHO'S LEADING THE HITTITES?
THE HITTITE EMPIRE'S COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.
AND... IT'S A *WOMAN!* THEY CALL HER YURI ISHTAR!

WHAT?
YURI ISHTAR?!
LET'S ATTACK RIGHT NOW!
GENERAL, THIS IS GREAT!
...ON A PLATTER!
YES! UGARIT'S BEEN HANDED TO US...
SMIRK
I FIND THIS INSULTING! DO THEY THINK WE'RE SOME SECOND RATE ARMY NOT WORTH THEIR TIME AND EFFORT?
NO MATTER. THEY SHALL REGRET NOT GIVING US A PROPER WELCOME.

WHEN YOU FIND THE HITTITE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF...
...BRING HER TO ME— ALIVE AND UNHARMED!
ROAR
ROAR
YURI!
THE GODS ARE GENEROUS... THEY'VE GIVEN ME ANOTHER CHANCE TO HAVE YOU!
ALL RIGHT MEN, FALL IN! WE MARCH ON UGARIT!